

Preliminary Damage Assessment Report

Montana - Wildfires Denial of Appeal

Denied on April 26, 2018

On November 15, 2017, Governor Steve Bullock requested a major disaster declaration due to wildfires during the period of September 1-20, 2017. The Governor requested emergency protective measures (Category B) under the Public Assistance program for 18 counties and 6 tribes and Hazard Mitigation statewide. On December 28, 2017, the Governor's request was denied. On January 26, 2018, Governor Bullock appealed the denial. During the period of October 12 to November 14, 2017, joint federal, state, tribal, and local government Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs) were conducted in the requested areas and are summarized below. PDAs estimate damages immediately after an event and are considered, along with several other factors, in determining whether a disaster is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the state and the affected local governments, and that Federal assistance is necessary.¹

On April 26, 2018, the Governor's appeal for a major disaster declaration was denied based on the determination that the impact from this event is not of the severity and magnitude that warrants a major disaster declaration.²

Summary of Damage Assessment Information Used in Determining Whether to Declare a Major Disaster

Individual Assistance - (Not requested)

- Total Number of Residences Impacted:³ -
 - Destroyed - -
 - Major Damage - -
 - Minor Damage - -
 - Affected - -
- Percentage of insured residences:⁴ -
- Percentage of low income households:⁵ -
- Percentage of ownership households:⁶ -
- Total Individual Assistance cost estimate: N/A

Public Assistance

- Primary Impact: Emergency protective measures
- Total Public Assistance cost estimate: \$44,857,660
- Statewide per capita impact: ⁷ \$45.34

- Statewide per capita impact indicator:⁸ \$1.46
- Countywide per capita impact: Beaverhead County (\$62.73), Big Horn County (\$8.85), Blaine County (\$68.40), Custer County (\$18.82), Granite County (\$705.52), Hill County (\$27.58), Jefferson County (\$50.85), Lewis and Clark County (\$9.15), Lincoln County (\$151.17), Meagher County (\$306.71), Missoula County (\$19.87), Pondera County (\$94.26), Powder River County (\$126.35), Powell County (\$309.14), Ravalli County (\$54.02), Rosebud County (\$23.85), Sanders County (\$260.76), and Sweet Grass County (\$31.18); the damage totals for the Blackfeet Tribe, Chippewa Cree Tribe, Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes, Crow Tribe, Fort Belknap Tribes, and the Northern Cheyenne Tribe are included in the totals for the counties in which they reside.
- Countywide per capita impact indicator:⁹ \$3.68

¹ The Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) process is a mechanism used to determine the impact and magnitude of damage and resulting needs of individuals, businesses, public sector, and community as a whole. Information collected is used by the State as a basis for the Governor's request for a major disaster or emergency declaration, and by the President in determining a response to the Governor's request (44 CFR § 206.33).

² When a Governor's request for major disaster assistance under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as amended (Stafford Act) is under review, a number of primary factors are considered to determine whether assistance is warranted. These factors are outlined in FEMA's regulations (44 CFR § 206.48). The President has ultimate discretion and decision making authority to declare major disasters and emergencies under the Stafford Act (42 U.S.C. § 5170 and § 5191).

³ Degree of damage to impacted residences:

- Destroyed – total loss of structure, structure is not economically feasible to repair, or complete failure to major structural components (e.g., collapse of basement walls/foundation, walls or roof);
- Major Damage – substantial failure to structural elements of residence (e.g., walls, floors, foundation), or damage that will take more than 30 days to repair;
- Minor Damage – home is damaged and uninhabitable, but may be made habitable in short period of time with repairs; and
- Affected – some damage to the structure and contents, but still habitable.

⁴ By law, Federal disaster assistance cannot duplicate insurance coverage. 42 U.S.C. § 5155 and 44 C.F.R. § 206.48(b)(5).

⁵ Special populations, such as low-income, the elderly, or the unemployed may indicate a greater need for assistance. 44 C.F.R. § 206.48(b)(3).

⁶ Ibid. 44 C.F.R. § 206.48(b)(3).

⁷ Based on State population in the 2010 Census.

⁸ Statewide Per Capita Impact Indicator for FY18, *Federal Register*, October 1, 2017.

⁹ Countywide Per Capita Impact Indicator for FY18, *Federal Register*, October 1, 2017.